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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ECE REFORM

Note by the Chairman and the Executive Secretary

1. As a matter of principle, the ECE reform should be implemented as soon as possible after it has been adopted by the Commission, thereby limiting transitional periods or measures to a strict minimum.

2. This principle needs to be applied to: (i) the implementation of changes in the ECE intergovernmental structure as outlined in Chapter I of the Plan of Action; (ii) the implementation of decisions related to all PSBs, as delineated in Chapters II to V of the Plan of Action; (iii) the reorganization of the secretariat.

I. CHANGES IN THE ECE INTERGOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE

3. These changes can be grouped into four categories: (a) reforms of existing bodies; (b) abolition of those PSBs which have no successor body; (c) dismantlement of those PSBs which have a successor body; (d) abolition of PSB related bodies.

(a) Reforms of existing bodies

4. Two existing PSBs are renamed and restructured: the *Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development* and the *Committee on Sustainable Energy*. The changes outlined in Chapter I-4 for the former and in Chapter I-6 for the latter should be implemented at their 1997 annual session, to take place in December and November respectively.

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5. *The Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies*, which used to report to the Commission, will report to the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development. This can also be implemented without any transition period: the next meeting of the Working Party, which is expected to take place in May, should be placed under the aegis of the Committee and report to the 1997 annual session of the latter.

(b) Abolition of PSBs without successor body

6. The *Senior Advisers on Science and Technology* and the *Working Party on Engineering Industries and Automation* are abolished and no meeting of these bodies were planned for this year. Their work should therefore stop immediately whilst, as mentioned in the Plan of Action, a few issues will be retained and taken up in the form of seminars and workshops organized within the framework of the Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities.

7. In compliance with operative paragraph 13 of Commission decision A (51), the activities of the *Committee on Agriculture* have been suspended, except for work on Standardization of Perishable Produce, which was transferred to the Committee on the Development of Trade, and work on Agricultural Statistics, which was transferred to the Conference of European Statisticians. In line with the Plan of Action, it is proposed that at its present ad hoc informal meeting, the Commission confirm these decisions which, so far, have been implemented on a provisional basis.

8. The *Senior Economic Advisers* (SEA) are abolished and replaced by an annual seminar 1/, the possible topics and exact format of which will be proposed to the autumn ad hoc informal meeting of the Commission by the Executive Secretary, after informal consultations with senior economic advisers in governments and academic circles. The SEA were expected to hold their thirty-third session this year. As there is no successor body and since, in the future, the annual seminar on economic issues will be prepared by the secretariat through informal consultations, no transition period is needed. It is therefore proposed to cancel the 1997 annual session and thus to terminate immediately the activities of the SEA.

(c) Abolition of PSBs having a successor body

9. The *Working Parties on the Chemical Industry* and on *Steel* are abolished whilst the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development is requested to establish two ad hoc groups of experts corresponding to these areas. The 1997 annual meeting of the Working Parties on the Chemical Industry and on Steel were expected to take place on 1-3 October and 29-31 October respectively. As a transitional step, it is proposed to maintain these last meetings in order to prepare proposals for the terms of reference and the programme of work of the ad hoc groups of experts 2/. These would subsequently be transmitted to the 1997 annual session of the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development (9-11 December), by the representative of the Bureau of each former Working Party who, as mentioned in Chapter I-4 of the Plan of Action, would be designated to join the Bureau of the Committee.

(d) Abolition of PSB related bodies

10. The *Working Party on Electric Power* is abolished. A few issues are retained and transferred partly to the Committee on Sustainable Energy and partly to the Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities. The matter will be discussed at the 1997 session of the Committee, preferably with the participation of a few members of the former Working Party and, therefore, there is no need to hold a last meeting of the abolished Working Party.

11. The *Working Party on Coal*, which used to report to the Committee on Energy, is abolished whilst the renewed Committee on Sustainable Energy is requested to establish an *ad hoc Group of Experts on Coal and Thermal Power*. It is proposed to hold a last meeting of the former Working Party on 3-5 November. This meeting would take place during the same period as the 1997 annual session of the Committee on Sustainable Energy (5-7 November), in order to prepare proposals on the terms of reference and programme of work of the future Group of Experts.

II. DECISIONS RELATED TO ALL PSBS

12. The Plan of Action contains a series of decisions which apply to all PSBs of the new intergovernmental structure and which are related to their way of operating. These decisions can be summarized as follows:

(a) *Review of PSBs' related bodies.* All PSBs are invited to review the status of their related bodies and to limit them to two categories: Working Parties which are of a standing nature, and ad hoc groups of experts which are established for a two-year period, with a precise programme of work and sunset clauses. PSBs are requested to prepare a report on that review, which will be examined at the 1998 annual session of the Commission.

For the future, the establishment by PSBs of any new related body should take the form of an ad hoc experts group. The Commission will decide upon any proposal from PSBs to establish a working party under their aegis.

(b) *Length of meetings.* The annual meetings of PSBs will be limited to three days and this objective should be reached within a maximum of two years as of April 1997. If, for specific reasons, a meeting needs to be extended, any additional session beyond the three day limit should be informal.

(c) *Reform of the PSB Bureaux.* All PSBs are requested as soon as possible to enlarge and strengthen the responsibility of their respective Bureau in order to enable them to fulfil the functions delineated in the Plan of Action, (p. 16). In view of this increased responsibility, PSBs are also invited to enlarge the composition of their respective Bureaux. The enlarged Bureaux will meet as often as necessary to perform their new role.

As outlined in Chapter IV of the Plan of Action, and in addition to the above-mentioned functions, the PSB Bureaux will have to conduct a periodic review of the work programme of other international organizations and institutions active in the same area with a view to seeking an appropriate

division of tasks through programme adjustments and promoting various forms of cooperation with these organizations. PSBs should also establish a system by which emerging duplication due to new activities initiated by other bodies would be quickly identified and notified.

(d) *Management of the programme of work.* For all activities, PSBs are requested to define concrete objectives and a timetable for completion.

New activities to be undertaken without the possibility of being financed by extrabudgetary resources will be offset by the termination of other activities requiring a similar level of resources.

PSBs will rank all activities initiated or underway in order of priority. They will indicate, if any, other important activities which they would wish to undertake beyond the existing programme and which would therefore require additional resources.

As of 1998, all PSBs are requested to hold their respective annual session during the period January-September so that any competing demands for resources can be examined by the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work every two years in the autumn, prior to the preparation of the programme budget submission by the Executive Secretary 3/.

(e) *Treatment of cross-sectoral concerns.* When they prepare, adopt and implement their programme of work, all PSBs and their respective Bureaux are invited to take into account the four cross-sectoral concerns as identified in Chapter II (p. 13-14) of the Plan of Action, namely: the outlook for sustainable development, the mainstreaming of the gender perspective, the special concern for the economies in transition and the involvement of the business community. Concerning the latter, as mentioned in Chapter V of the Plan of Action, PSBs are invited to promote various forms of such involvement in their respective programme of activities.

13. PSBs are requested to organize the implementation of these decisions as of their next annual session. It is proposed that the Chairman of the Commission and the Executive Secretary meet each of the Chairmen of the PSBs on the occasion of the 1997 Jubilee session of the Commission, in order to brief them fully on these decisions and to discuss ways of implementing them expeditiously. It is also proposed that the Bureau of each PSB and of the Commission itself delegate one of its members to monitor such implementation.

III. SECRETARIAT REORGANIZATION

14. Implementation of the Plan of Action implies the abolishment of the Industry and Technology Division and the creation of the Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities. Such changes have been incorporated into the proposed programme budget submission in respect of the 1998-1999 biennium.

15. In addition, any change in organizational structure is subject to the approval of the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management. A request for such approval is being prepared.

16. Implementation of the Plan of Action also requires adjustment in the number of posts allocated to each Division; this also has been reflected in budget submission. The budget proposals strictly reflect the allocation of resources as outlined in the Plan of Action.

17. It is proposed that pending formal approval of the revised organizational structure and of the budget, the staff be informally redeployed as per the budget submission to those sectors being strengthened and to the newly created Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities.

18. Such redeployments will serve to alleviate the uncertainty among the staff concerned and to ensure implementation of new approaches of work as reflected in the Plan of Action.

Notes

1/ At their informal session on 27-28 January, the SEA suggested that the annual seminar be referred to as "ECE Economic Forum" in order to attract a high level of participation.

2/ These meetings will not delay the staff redeployment as they can be prepared by the relevant staff in their new location in the Division for Trade, Industry and Entreprise Development.

3/ The Group of Experts on the Programme of Work will hold its first meeting of this type in Autumn 1998. In addition, as outlined in the Plan of Action (p.19), it may also meet at any time in the year when important unexpected changes in the resource base are decided by the relevant bodies of the General Assembly or at the request of the Bureau or the Executive Secretary.